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FINE TUNING
ALEX STRACHAN

CSI breaks out of its usual box

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (CFCF-12, CJOH-8, WCAX-3, 9 p.m.) usually adheres to a rigid formula – one of the reasons it's so popular is regular viewers know exactly what to expect – but some of its best episodes are when it steps outside the box. Tonight's rerun from April, 4 x 4, is just such an episode. It follows four seemingly unrelated cases over the course of a single night: a stolen Hummer and a flattened taco stand, an auto-show model found dead inside a camper van on the showroom floor, a boy discovered dead on a bus stop bench, and a bodybuilder seemingly eaten away by mould.

It sounds like a writer's gimmick, but that's not how it plays out: in the hands of scenarists Dustin Lee Abraham, David Rambo and director Terrence O'Hara, everything comes together seamlessly, without seeming contrived in any way.

◆ The self-explanatory docudrama **Hiroshima (CBMT-6, 8 p.m.)** is one of those history-themed TV stunts: the second-by-second, minute-by-minute re-creation of a historical event, staged by actors and re-imagined by computer-generated imaging.

Originally made for the BBC, Hiroshima covers the three weeks between the first atomic test explosion in the New Mexico desert to the dropping of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945. It was one of history's single most bloody acts, incinerating 100,000 Japanese in the blink of an eye.

The film interweaves parallel storylines, showing both the Japanese and U.S. perspectives, and tries to show what it's like to live through a nuclear explosion, millisecond by millisecond.

It's a stunt – actual archival footage of the bomb's aftermath remains the most powerful testament to that day, and rightly so – but Hiroshima does bring the day's events to life more than a dry history text might.

CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

NEW CD RELEASES

Here is a selective list of Tuesday's scheduled releases. Dates subject to change. VA = Various Artists; OST = Original Soundtrack.

POP & ROCK NEW RELEASES

The Almighty. I Hate Us ... Even More (MapleNationwide).
James Blunt. Back to Bedlam (Atlantic).
Meredith Bragg. Vol. 1 (MapleNationwide).
Deadman. Our Eternal Ghosts (Navarre).
The Doleful Lions. Shaded Lodge and Mausoleum (MapleNationwide).
Dragonland. Starfall (Navarre).
Elope. The No Name Record (MapleNationwide).
Firewind. Forged by Fire (Navarre).
Flophouse Jr. Houseboat (Maximum Music).
Flowing Tears. Razorbliss (Navarre).
David Fridlund. Amaterasu (MapleNationwide).
Eliza Gilkyson. Paradise Hotel (Red House).
Gogol Bordello. Gypsy Punks: Underdog World Strike (Warcon).
Hootie and the Blowfish. Looking for Lucky (Sneaky Long).
The Junior Varsity. Wide Eyed (Victory).
Last Days of April. Rainmaker (MapleNationwide).
Tommy Lee. Tommyland: The Ride (604).
Mas Rapido. Mas Rapido (MapleNationwide).
Milk Inc. Closer (Water Music).
The Novaks. The Novaks (Sonic).
The Orange Peels. Circling the Sun (MapleNationwide).
Pennywise. The Fuse (Epitaph).
Quit Your Day Job. Quit Your Day Job (MapleNationwide).
Snow and Voices. Snow and Voices (MapleNationwide).
Staind. Chapter V (Elektra).
Stephen Stills. Man Alive! (Titan/Pyramid).
OST. Bad News Bears (Rykodisc).
VA. Killer Queen: A Tribute to Queen (Hollywood).

POP & ROCK FROM THE VAULTS

Gentle Giant. Giant for a Day; The Missing Piece; Playing the Fool (Navarre).
George Lynch. Lost Lynch (Navarre).
Ol' Dirty Bastard. A Son Unique (Def Jam).
Robert Palmer. The Very Best of the Island Years (Island).

COUNTRY & FOLK NEW RELEASES

Nickel Creek. Why Should the Fire Die? (Sugar Hill).
Richard Thompson. Front Parlour Ballads (True North).

JAZZ NEW RELEASES

Bill Frisell. East/West (Nonesuch).
Tim Ries. The Rolling Stones Project (Concord).

JAZZ FROM THE VAULTS

Pat Metheny and Ornette Coleman. Song X (Nonesuch).

FRANCOFOLIES

Daniel Boucher (in white shirt at left rear) rehearses with Stefie Shock (front) for tonight's gala, Les Héritiers de Félix Leclerc. DAVE SIDAWAY THE GAZETTE

Stefie Shock and Daniel Boucher lead a 10th anniversary gala celebrating both the legacy of the chansonnier and winners of his eponymous prize

The Félix fraternity

JUAN RODRIGUEZ
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

The gaggle of photographers was patiently waiting for Daniel Boucher to arrive at a Parthenais St. rehearsal studio a couple of days ago, when suddenly Stefie Shock zoomed into the parking lot on his mountain bike. His jet-black hair flying in all directions, big smile breaking up his tanned face, Shock seemed a little, uh, shocked at the fusillade of clicks-and-whirs but quickly got into the swing of things.

Meanwhile, as Shock chit-chatted about his "bon Québécois bike," Boucher arrived quietly in white shirt, shorts and sandals, carrying a thick binder of music for tonight's Place des Arts gala celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Prix Félix Leclerc (honouring up-and-coming stars of chanson). The two former prize-winners winked at each other, since this was all staged for the ravenous local press.

The award, however, is no joke. The list of former winners playing the concert is a roll call of some of the brightest talent illuminating a local scene that most everyone agrees is exploding with creativity: Pierre Lapointe, Yann Perreau, Loco Locass, Mara Tremblay, Sylvie Paquette, Lili Fatale, in addition to Boucher, Shock and this year's winner, Vincent Vallières.

The rustic, wood prize – oui, it looks as if it came out of a souvenir shop – is both an official consecration (backed by a panel of music journalists and industry people) and a publicity push. However these things are decided, the list of winners testifies to an almost clairvoyant track record.

"It's a good promotion, because often people don't know too much about the artists who win this prize," said Shock, rocker with a nocturnal eye and heart of gold. "But it's also given the scene some credibility." Its connection to France – the award also honours francophone singers from Europe, including M, Mickey 3D and, this year, Nicolas Jules – "gives us an opening to Europe, which we don't have enough of. We import a lot of stuff, but don't have enough exports, which I just don't find right. The Prix Félix Leclerc has changed things bit by bit." Leclerc was the first Québécois chansonnier to make an impression in France, and Shock has just seen his inimitably Montréalais party album Le Décor released overseas.

Boucher's experience has been mixed. When he won the award in 2000 he had released a first album, Dix mille matins, with blockbuster sales of over 100,000 and a tour lasting until 2002. Last year, his wildly ambitious day-in-the-life story, La Patente, struggled to sell 20,000, as radio failed to support it and the album had a few "yes, but" reviews. (In my opinion, it's a classic of its kind: big, sprawling and juicy.)

Boucher seems sanguine at La Patente's fate. "Let's say I think it surprised people," he said with an ironic lift of his eyebrows. "Many people told me they were blown away, but there were many others who like the first one better. We did the second one by ourselves (with his own record company, Boucane Bleue), from start to finish. It's not an album made to be digested quickly, it's not fast food. Now I think, and hope, that maybe it's an album destined to age well, have a long life."

If his audacity in La Patente was under-appreciated initially, Boucher sees a silver lining: "After La Patente we can do whatever we want to do, and it won't come as a big surprise anymore. I've got to take things like that. Otherwise I might as well change my job."

He's looking forward to hosting what promises to be a unique opportunity for more interaction than usual in these sorts of homages, as befits what Boucher says are historically fertile times.

"We moved away from the pattern of house band backing up the artists from far off, we're trying to offer un peu de slack.

> "It's like Lennon and McCartney, competition but healthy."
> Daniel Boucher on working with Stefie Shock

Everybody knows each other, so we can try duos, trios. Maybe it's because we all arrived at around the same time, but there's something in the air. Honestly, I think this is one of the best creative periods in the entire history of Québécois chanson. It's hard to explain. Perhaps because since the early '80s, when it seemed as if creativity took a long break, it had been a long time since we were just allowed to create."

The camaraderie between Boucher and Shock was evident at the rehearsal, sharing glances and laughs over certain sneaky guitar riffs. But, says Boucher, "it wouldn't be honest to say there's no competition. We like and respect each other, but the competition pushes us. It's normal, it's like Lennon and McCartney, competition but healthy."

Of course, contests, awards and prizes are all part of Quebec's media bonanza and bazaar. Not the least of which is the wildly popular Star Académie, reviled in intellectual circles. But, as former winner Fatale (née Nathalie Courchesne) claimed, the reality shows, "whether you love them or hate them, at least made people more aware of singers. The phenomenon gave people a chance to be fans, to have an opinion. They become more attuned to the world of the artiste and song. So in that way it played a role (in the current renaissance)."

Adds Lapointe, last year's Prix Félix Leclerc winner: "Now that the Star Académie wave is subsiding a bit, there's a hunger to balance things out with music that's strong artistically rather than just cheesy pop."

That much can be heard on Les Fous de l'île, a compilation album with tracks from each of the Prix Félix Leclerc's first 10 winners, in addition to a bonus eight-minute in-concert track by Leclerc himself. Despite the differing styles – from Loco Locass séparatiste rap to Lapointe's fantastical music-hall to Tremblay's urbain-western – one thing binds this album: quality. (And all profits go to the Fondation Félix Leclerc.)

Les Héritiers de Félix Leclerc, hosted by Daniel Boucher, with Loco Locass, Yann Perreau, Mara Tremblay, Pierre Lapointe, Stefie Shock, Sylvie Paquette and Lili Fatale, takes place tonight at 8 at Théâtre Maisonneuve, 175 Ste. Catherine St. W. Tickets cost $29.50 to $49.50 at Place des Arts, (514) 842-2112; in person at Spectrum, 318 Ste. Catherine St. W.; or via Admission, (514) 790-1245 or www.admission.com.

What's on today at the festival

3 and 5 p.m. Les Petites Tounes, Chapiteau Le Lait stage.
4 and 7 p.m. PirateFolies presented by the le collectif Terre et Mer, Le Monde Forain Loto-Québec stage.
5 p.m. Sylvie Laliberté, Le Monde FrancoFou Le Lait stage.
6 p.m. Vincent Caza, Ford Focus stage.
7 p.m. Ariane Gauthier, Le Monde Pop Desjardins stage; Amadou & Mariam, Le Spectrum, 318 Ste. Catherine St. W. Tickets: $29.50; Daara J, Le Monde Hip Hop Solo Mobile stage.
8 p.m. Prix Félix Leclerc winners celebrate the 10th anniversary of the award, Théâtre Maisonneuve of Place des Arts. Tickets: $29.50 to $49.50; Masse Poésie, Labatt Blue stage.
8 and 10 p.m. Station 2x4, Chapiteau Le Lait stage; Catherine Durand, Le Monde FrancoFou Le Lait stage; Labess, Hydro-Québec Multicultural stage.
8:30 p.m. Jim Corcoran, Club Soda, 1225 St. Laurent Blvd. Tickets: $34.50.
9 p.m. Fred Fortin and Vincent Vallières, Metropolis, 59 Ste. Catherine St. E. Tickets: $17.50; Monsieur Lambert and the Bébert Orchestra, Le Monde Pop Desjardins stage; Daara J, Le Monde Hip Hop Solo Mobile stage.
9 and 11 p.m. Ima, Ford Focus stage.
10 p.m. JP Nataf and Albin de la Simone, Monument National. Tickets: $15.50; No One Is Innocent, Labatt Blue stage.
11 p.m. Minimum Serious, Le Spectrum, 318 Ste. Catherine St. W. Tickets: $9.50.
Midnight: Melissa Mars, Le Shag, Monument National café.

FrancoFolies outdoor events are open daily from 3 p.m. to midnight through Saturday, bordered by Ste. Catherine St. and President Kennedy Ave., and Bleury and St. Urbain Sts. For information, including where to get tickets **for ticketed shows,** see www.francofolies.com or call (514) 876-8989 or 1-(888)-444-9114.

Chao | His influence is all over Amadou & Mariam's new CD

CONTINUED FROM D1

"She sang, and taught students to sing and dance," Bagayoko said. "I had played (guitar) in many orchestras in Mali, including (Salif Keita's) Ambassadeurs du Motel."

They moved in together, and started playing together. Eventually, they moved to Ivory Coast, releasing four cassettes between 1988 and 1993, and became big names in West Africa.

By 1994, they were ready for another move. They went to France where, beginning in 1998, they released three major-label albums, and toured France and Europe.

They have played Montreal twice in recent years, once at Les FrancoFolies and once at Nuits d'Afrique. Tonight's sold-out show at the Spectrum looks like their highest-profile performance here to date.

Which brings us back to Chao. Dimanche à Bamako has his fingerprints all over it. "Produced by and with Manu Chao," the CD cover proclaims. The album contains songs written by him, and he is featured in one way or another on all but one track. It is a merging of worlds.

"He already liked our music," said Bagayoko. "He was ready to give his maximum so that the songs were good and what we liked. He brought his style of playing, his rhythm guitar and his own pieces, on which he asked us to sing. And he brought his little sounds, his sirens and his way of arranging voices.

"We found him super. He was very nice. We were stunned. He is a big star in Europe. So the simplicity with which he approached things was surprising."

Dimanche à Bamako is still very much an Amadou & Mariam record. Recorded in Mali and France, it swings with a gentle ease. Doumbia's vocals have a fluttery innocence, and Bagayoko's guitars are nimble and airy. "The sounds we use are sounds people want to hear," Bagayoko said. "It corresponds to the pleasure of the people."

He is proud of the themes they broach: "We try to bring messages to our songs – peace, solidarity and love. We are husband and wife, so we share our happiness, and we want others to profit from it, too."

He mentions the song La Réalité, which "talks of life's highs and lows. One person sings and another cries. But people have to have the courage to fight. The world is like that.

"Vive la solidarité entre les peuples," is the theme of La Paix, while Beaux Dimanches is about weddings in Bamako. "We sang that so people get an idea of life in Mali."

Of having their sound so influenced by another artist, Bagayoko is unperturbed. "We did what we wanted," he said. "It was an 'album de rencontre.' (Chao) accompanied us according to his feeling. C'était une entente parfaite."

Amadou & Mariam perform tonight at 7 at the Spectrum as part of Les FrancoFolies. The show is sold out.

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FRANCOFOLIES NOTES

Tout le Montréal was out in force to see the young French vocal sensation **Camille** at the Spectrum on Tuesday night – from Yann Perreau to Paul Piché to Champion himself. Above all, the evening belonged to legions of young women being themselves, as is Camille's wont.

Video clips hovered above, showing Camille making ugly faces (like photographer Diane Arbus channeled through early-surrealist Buñuel). She cavorted about with a white elastic cord stretched between two poles (referring to her hit album Le Fil, or tightrope), oozing confident freedom of movement. Her narrative is episodic, intensely personal, and vibrantly musical, spilling polyrhythms with soaring melodic overtones (using minimal instrumentation to punctuate her vocalese).

This was much more satisfying than her disappointing outdoor show the day previous, where a lackadaisical "look-at-me" attitude reigned. Indeed, Camille's challenge will be to balance the buzz with more focused observations about being in this maelstrom.

Christophe is a long-forgotten figure in French pop from the '60s, '70s and '80s whom superstar **Alain Bashung** invited to his Carte Blanche last weekend. "We don't see him much on stage because he dreams of certain perfect aesthetic things," said Bashung, "but to me, he gave the best show of the last year." The reasons were evident at Christophe's first visit to Montreal, at Club Soda on Sunday night. A diminutive figure dressed in black (with a white stripe down his trousers), his saturnine, pretty-boy, disco features now have a kind of drooping elegance, his white hair pulled back like a lion's. His strange, haunting, high-pitched voice backed by electronica was extra-terrestrial, disembodied, much like Jimmy Scott's in Twin Peaks (the TV show and movie). Christophe sang as if he was in a state of awe toward the words, such as on Les Mot bleus, his 1975 classic, Les Paradis perdus and, with Bashung dropping by to twang along, Cette vie-là. What a life, indeed, and what a magical concert. Expect a new album from Christophe next year.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Two of Montreal's hottest French rock bands tear up Les FrancoFolies in the late-night Hip Rap Rock series at the Spectrum. Rambunctious garage rockers **Malajube** play with France's **Minimum Serious** tonight at 11, while campy rock 'n' rollers **Les Breastfeeders** tear it up with **No One Is Innocent** tomorrow. Tickets cost $9.50, plus fees, per show.

T'CHA DUNLEVY

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